

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

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Kosharki (Sheep folds). This was a game which had been played extensively a generation ago, but its use was dying out in the village. The children would build miniature sheep folds, houses, and fences out of rocks. This game corresponded after a fashion to our building with blocks.

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The outstanding characteristic of all these games was that they required little equipment and few participants. At home, the play groups were inevitably restricted to the family and nearest neighbors, often relatives. At school, children could choose relatives and other children in the same grade. Play groups in the fields were formed on the basis of family ownership of land and common pasture. These latter groups often gathered in the village and went to the fields together, the youngsters carrying loaves of bread, baked peppers, and fresh tomatoes. Even in play, the family was important, for every type of play group almost automatically included relatives. As was previously pointed out, there was less quarreling among the children who were related. I often heard: "You shouldn't hit him; he's your relative."

The new types of play were still limited. The radio, comic papers, and movies were almost unknown to the village child, just as they were to the average adult. Only twenty-five newspapers reached the village daily, and these had few comic strips. Magazines and books were a rarity. Sofia bookshops had some exquisite children's books, but I never saw one in the village. Sometimes when I came into a village home on a winter evening, I would see an unforgettable picture. Near the fire the father sat quietly, elbows on knees, the mother was spinning near the one dim electric bulb, and in the center, crouched at the low table, a boy, nine or ten years old, was laboriously reading some fragment of a periodical to his parents. Their pride and pleasure was unspoken but obvious.

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There was one radio in the village, and the children were of course conscious of it as it blared incessantly in Renaissance Square, but it was not a part of their life, any more than the movies or trains. Only 45 per cent of the total population, including babies, had ever attended a movie, and less than 40 per cent had ever been on a train.

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668 living in a goldfish bowl, it was not long before the peasants knew
661 that almost a million leva (notice how rounded or approximate the
687 numbers are in such stories) had disappeared from local public funds.
There was no official explanation as to its whereabouts, but one Communist had become quite rich and built himself a house better than the village expected of him. Later he was expelled from the party, reputedly because of conversion of funds, but even this action did not restore the funds to the public treasury.

Unquestionably, a loyal supporter of the Fatherland Front was able at times to use his political connections for personal advantage. The peasants would have been surprised if this were not the case, for they philosophically said, "Whoever sticks his fingers in honey is apt to lick them."

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668 Mention was made in the last chapter of the phenomenal increase in radio ownership since 1937. Now about every third home has a receiving set and is thus in contact with the propaganda line of the government-controlled broadcasting service. Listening to the radio had become a new recreational pattern for many people. Over and over again I asked them what programs they preferred. The men, perhaps because they deemed it the proper answer, often said that they listened to the news. Quite a few were quick to add, "It's nothing but lies though." Many of the women preferred the folk music, and the young people jazz. Long speeches claimed few listeners. The net effect of radio listening then was recreational, with some political influence exerted upon the devotees of the newscast. As yet, the radio had not become a channel for education or raising the standard of living. I wondered, too, just when it would, for the peasants had little hesitation in turning off the set if the program became too serious, and most educational programs under Communist leadership were inclined to be serious.

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668 American and British influence was sufficiently strong to force the Fatherland Front officials to allow an opposition press. Although this press was beset with difficulties in 1945, it nevertheless became a vehement, at times vitriolic, critic of the regime in power. It took a strong pro-American, pro-British complexion, though never out-and-out anti-Russian. A good check on Agrarian claims of majority sup-

Three or four lectures, dealing with topics related to the elevation of village life, are given each year by men from outside. Each government inspector from the various departments is required to visit the village once a year and some in the course of this visit take occasion to give an educational address to the people. I do not feel, however, that the peasants take a very vital interest in these talks unless they get into the realm of politics, always a fascinating subject. 544

From the 15th of May until August 1st soldiers in training are encamped in and about Dragalevtsy, but it is only occasionally that they mingle with the young people of the village. Every year, however, three or four village girls become engaged to soldiers and subsequently upon marriage move elsewhere. 609

The outside world is also represented by a few salesmen and speculators in land and cattle, these numbering about fifteen a week. They transact their business with the interested party, perhaps break bread with him, and then go on their way.

4. TELEPHONE, RADIO, LETTERS, PRINTED MATTER. There are two radios in the village, one belonging to the priest and the other standing in the window of the mayor's office to blare forth its music and messages to passersby in the main square. The first program I heard from the public radio was the aria, "My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice," from the opera *Samson and Delila* as played by an orchestra in Amsterdam, although music like this is soon turned off in preference to the folk-music periodically broadcast from the Sofia station. 207 •

There is one telephone in the village in the office adjacent to the mayor's. There is great pomp about the use of this instrument since one pays two cents and receives a receipt of payment from the telephone operator. Making a telephone call is a serious affair, so serious, in fact, that few peasants ever do so. 206

The post arrives around one o'clock each week-day afternoon, but there is little excitement attached to its coming, for not more than ten personal letters, usually for the intelligentsia, arrive daily for the whole village. A peasant family receives no more than one or two letters a year. Twenty newspapers and twenty magazines come each day for the 279 families. According to data furnished by 279 questionnaires, 21 families bought or received newspapers* to 257 who did not; and 7 families received magazines to 271 who did not. In both cases, 1 family failed to report. 205
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*Of these, 13 families received a daily newspaper daily; 2 received a daily paper twice a week; 1, once a week; and 5 received a weekly paper regularly.